



For Immediate Release

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:

Warwick Data in Your Backyard

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**Warwick, RI, October 11, 2007** - Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Research Analyst, Elaine Farber presented data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* to an audience of community and policy leaders. As part of the *Data in Your Backyard Series*, the presentation highlighted indicators of child well-being in Warwick and included a community discussion about the implications of the data. The presentation was held on **Thursday, October 11, 2007 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Warwick Public Library, 600 Sandy Lane, Warwick, RI.**

**Family and Community**

According to *Census 2000*, there were 18,780 children under the age of 18 residing in Warwick, a 3% increase from the 1990 decennial census. The 2000 Census data indicate that 6.7% of all children in Warwick under age 18 live below 100% of the federal poverty threshold (\$20,444 for a family of four). Of the 1,243 children living below the poverty threshold in Warwick, almost one-third (410) lived in extreme poverty, defined as income at or below half of the federal poverty line (or \$8,121 for a family of three). Research shows that families who have incomes above the poverty threshold also struggle to make ends meet. Approximately one in five children in Warwick under age 18 live below 200% of the federal poverty threshold (\$40,888 for a family of four).

According to new data from the Census Bureau's *2006 American Community Survey*, child poverty in Rhode Island decreased from 19.5% in 2005 to 15.1% in 2006. Rhode Island now ranks 17<sup>th</sup> in the country for child

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poverty, an improvement from last year when Rhode Island ranked 35<sup>th</sup>. “This significant drop in Rhode Island’s child poverty rate is good news for Rhode Island families,” stated Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT. “We are seeing the results of our state’s investments in children.” The *2006 American Community Survey* data, released by the U.S. Census Bureau in August 2007, indicate that the total number of Rhode Island children living in poverty decreased from 46,894 children under age 18 in 2005 to 35,456 children in 2006. Bryant noted, “We know that children living in families with incomes below the poverty threshold are at much higher risk for poor outcomes. Reducing child poverty rates directly influences a child’s chance for success.”

## **Health**

Warwick continues to do well on indicators of children’s health. Between 2001 and 2005, the percentage of women receiving delayed prenatal care in Warwick was 6.5%, lower than the state rate of 9.4%. Early prenatal care is important to identify and treat health problems and influence health behaviors that can compromise fetal development, infant health and maternal health. In addition, the infant mortality rate in Warwick of 5.2 per 1,000 live births was below the state rate of 6.4 per 1,000 live births.

Between 2001 and 2005, Warwick had a teen birth rate of 9.4 births per every 1,000 girls ages 15-17, which was less than half the state rate of 19.5 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-17. The teen birth rate in Warwick for older teens ages 18-19 was 45.9 per 1,000 teens, slightly higher than the state rate of 44.0 per 1,000 teens. Elaine Farber, Research Analyst at Rhode Island KIDS COUNT noted, “While it is very positive that the birth rate among young teens in Warwick is low, we should not be complacent. The research shows that babies born to older teens do not have much better outcomes than those born to teens in younger age groups. Families who delay childbearing until their mid-to-late 20s are more likely to have better education and economic status and have children who are healthier and more successful in school.”

A new indicator in this year’s Factbook highlights the number of preterm births (defined as infants who are born before 37 weeks gestation). Between 2001 and 2005, there were 526 Warwick infants born preterm, making up 12% of infants born to Warwick mothers during that period. The overall Rhode Island rate was 12% as well. Preterm birth is a major determinant of infant mortality and illness and is the leading cause of death among newborns during the first month of life in the U.S.

## Education

Data from the *2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* were presented on several indicators focused on programs that can lead to increased school readiness and school success, including full-day kindergarten and early care and education. Access to full-day kindergarten in Warwick is limited, with only 5% of kindergarteners in Warwick attending a full-day program in the 2006-2007 school year, compared to 50% for the state. Research shows that children in full-day kindergarten benefit academically and are more likely to be ready for first grade than children in half-day kindergarten.

Other education highlights include:

- In Warwick, the percentage of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students proficient in reading remained stable at 71% in October 2005 and 72% in October 2006. This compares to a statewide 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency level of 63% in 2006. The percentage of Warwick 8<sup>th</sup> graders proficient in reading was 64% in October 2006, up from 59% in October 2005. This compares to a statewide 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency of 58%. These data are based on the *New England Common Assessment Program* initiated by the Rhode Island Department of Education in 2005.
- In 2006, 86% of Warwick students graduated from high school, down from 2005 when 89% of students graduated. This is comparable to the state high school graduation rate of 85% in 2006. Young adults who drop out of high school are almost four times as likely to be unemployed as those with a bachelor's degree and are more likely to earn lower wages than those with a high school diploma.
- Warwick continues to maintain a high standard of school performance in its elementary schools, with 18 classified as high performing and 2 classified as moderately performing. All three middle schools are also classified as high performing. However, only one of Warwick's three high schools is classified as high performing and two are classified as making insufficient progress. Last year, all three high schools in Warwick were classified as high performing. These classifications are based on 37 annual targets for each school.

- Warwick also has a lower student mobility rate (13%) than the state as a whole (17%). Student mobility is related to negative educational outcomes, including higher absence rates and lower standardized test scores.

### **Economic Well-Being**

Warwick has seen improvements in the past year in the percentage of income-eligible children under age 18 who are enrolled in the Food Stamp Program. Last year the food stamp participation rate was 66%, and this year it is 76%, which is 7 percentage points higher than the state average of 69%. In Warwick, only 19% of the 2,418 low-income students eligible for School Breakfast actually participate in the program. This participation rate is lower than the state rate of 30%. Low-income children who have access to food programs – such as School Breakfast and Food Stamps – are less likely to experience hunger and are more likely to have better nutrition that is important to their healthy development and educational performance.

Ms. Bryant noted, “Warwick’s city and community leaders have a track record of leadership on children’s health and education issues, but there is still work to do. We need to continue to improve access to high quality early care, full-day kindergarten and high quality schools if we are to give every child in Warwick the opportunity to lead healthy and productive lives. More can be done to build upon existing efforts to ensure that children have access to the food and nutrition programs that are important to health and educational success.”

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the economic well-being, health, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.